



Pleading for the right to the city's night

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Pleading for the right to the city's night

Luc Gwiazdzinski, Geographer (*)

PRINCIPLES TO BE AFFIRMED

Strengthening Urban Equality. The night is not the space of freedom dreamt by artists: the system is mutilated, supply is reduced and concentrated, costs are high, diversity is illusory and citizenship is limited. At night, the collective space and urban supply are reduced due to the closing of public spaces (businesses, stations, churches or parks). The more we advance into the night, the harsher center-periphery differences become, both in terms of lighting and services. Regarding infrastructure and services such as lighting, there is a need to work around the notion of “urban equality”. The night is sadder at the margins than in the centers. We cannot accept the existence of differences between a diurnal and a nocturnal citizenry, the latter deprived of public services.

Reconstructing a complete Urban System at Night. In face of the progressive colonization of the night by the economy and of the risk of de- synchronizations, we propose to change certain temporalities and operation times of public services in order to reconstruct a complete urban system at night which respects all; a system which abides to the mutations affecting our lives, our cities, our territories and our organizations. We cannot accept the existence of differences between a diurnal and a nocturnal citizenry, the latter deprived of public services. Once he/she is obliged to work at night, why wouldn't a salaried worker have the right to public transportation?

Imposing a “Right to the City” at Night. We are not fully- fledged citizens in an urban nightlife where it is impossible to benefit from certain basic rights. Even our status as producers and consumers is limited in face of the supply of urban services and the specialized and reduced nature of employment on offer. It is necessary to develop a “nocturnal citizenship” meeting the rights of all in space and time, to articulate a “Right to the city” which is not limited to the daytime period: a “Right to the city” for all, everywhere, at any time.

Privileging human Presence. Delinquency and fear develop in places and in moments in which the city is deprived of part of its activities. At night, when tensions are stronger, it is necessary to implement the conditions for a natural social support and to privilege human presence in all neighborhoods: conditions for businesses and public services to remain functioning, 24-hour

police stations, nighttime sports and socio-cultural centers, night-bus networks, “nocturnal correspondents” and non-armed policemen present in neighborhoods 24 hours a day.

NEW APPROACHES TO BE DEVELOPED

In a space-time in which notions of security and freedom are essential to make the nights of our cities moments of exchange and conviviality, and in order to make our public spaces attractive again, it is necessary to imagine new tools and new approaches.

Imagining an Urbanism of the Night. We must imagine an urbanism pertaining to the question of the night based on some major principles: hospitality of public spaces and urban equipment in face of different life conditions; information regarding lesser known and apprehended territories; quality while faced with a difficult environment; urban equality tackling the chiasm between center

and periphery; sensibility instead of the strict means-end rationality prominent during the day; variety in face of the risks of trivialization; the unexpectedness of invention and events; interchangeability between light and shadow when faced with risks of homogenization; security motivated by the enhancement of the city’s nightlife, by the increase in human presence rather than security technologies; enchantment of the urban night as a reservoir of permanent invention.

Implementing a Chrono-Urbanism. We must aim at defining, in a wider sense, the methods and tools of a balanced space-time planning, both inside agglomerations and in the different scales of the urban tissue. The inclusion of time in urban planning is a necessity. Conflicts traditionally concentrated in the use of space now concern the occupation of time and the administration of urban rhythms. At stake here is the need to protect, at the same time, the periods of time and the autonomy of these periods; of conceiving different sectors of the city in function of its temporal profile; and of strategically guiding current tendencies in order to manage urban functioning intelligently. A question of time.

Relying on the Oasis of continuous Time. Reflecting on the 24-hour city does not imply subjecting the whole city to ceaseless activity. The effort may lean on the “oasis of continuous time” by increasingly offering clusters of public and private services (businesses, health centers, childcare services, etc.), ensuring the right to the city and setting them up in places which are adapted to the city’s flows, without disturbing the city which sleeps. Places of transit– stations, airports, service plazas –, where nomads stop and restock, are possible places for people both stimulated and constrained to live the city’s nightlife. They could also assure services to the “safekeeping city”. It’s a question of conceiving an accessible and hospitable city where those who go out at night – for work or leisure – may do it in good conditions and without waking up the rest. The development of service centers open 24 hours a day and 7 days a week with access to spaces where people circulate (metro stations, service stations...) is a priority. Most public and

private services would be assured by a good distribution of these two poles of continuous time, mixing the functions of the “safekeeping city” (security, health, etc.) and the other functions usually absent or reduced during the night: clothes and food businesses, culture, restaurants, public transportation, administration, religion or leisure, and even certain educational or political activities in places where these livened up or charged fluxes cannot disturb the sleeping city. Nighttime and the late hours have become essential collective times in which we should be able to “make society”.

Building a flexible City. Faced with the extent to which the dominion of the day prevails, a mixed use of collective space should be imagined with regard to hospitality, urbanity and exchange both in cities in general and on the streets. Nighttime and the late hours have become essential collective times in which we should be able to “make society”. The rules for the sharing of public space between the different users – residents, workers, visitors, tourists – of a 24 hours a day and 7 days a week city are yet to be invented, such as the regulation as well as the spatial and temporal limits of this mixed use. The definition of rules and codes of conduct for the use of collective space should be encouraged. New forms of governance and conciliation should be developed. The adaptability of urban equipment with different times and uses of collective space should be studied. Public space, the street, the bank, the bus stop, the street lamp, the terminals and signposts should evolve towards a greater adaptability and interaction with users in the creation of intelligent cities and streets. We must improve urbanity and hospitality. These evolutions need the invention of an adaptable urban design, the development of a new ergonomics of the city and the integration of a new modular identity. The artist who knows how to play with the ephemeral and how to enchant the space around it may reencounter a place in the mechanisms of co-construction and of the invention of a city made up by flexible collective spaces. **These evolutions need the invention of an adaptable urban design, the development of a new ergonomics of the city and the integration of a new modular identity.**

Taking inspiration on Routes already taken. Transports, services, conciliation, governance... The question of urban nightlife is not only an invention of the imagination. It can already be observed and used as an inspiration by the good practices of many cities in Europe and the world. We still cannot talk of a “Public Policy of Urban Nightlife”. On the other hand, we notice that everywhere public initiatives multiply in a moment in which nocturnal liveliness becomes an important attraction criterion, inscribing themselves along the lines of a double-edged logic concerning the improvement of the quality of life of inhabitants and the development of territorial marketing. All over the world, the general trend is to increase the periodicity, the range and the frequency of public transportation. In Zurich, for example, the coordinated development of both nighttime transportation and services is accompanied by a boom in the amount of nocturnal businesses. Lyon successfully tested special buses. In Paris, during the Nuits Blanches (White Nights), the last subway worked until later. In other places, carpooling and on demand transport operations were successfully created. All over the world, the general trend is to increase the periodicity, the range and the frequency of public transportation. In London, the mayor Boris

Johnson announced that from 2015 the metro will be open all night during weekdays and weekends in order to intensify the capital's economy, tourism, investments and employment opportunities.

In Brussels and Lyon, a "Nightlife Observatory" allowed us to explore nightlife-related data. Since the 1990s, studies on the "night economy" have been undertaken in cities like Leeds and Manchester. In 2002, the study entitled "Late-night London" was published. "Planning and Managing the Late-Night Economy" insisted on the problems of a 24-hour London. Other studies have taken place in London (London Plan, 2004), Gloucester (2005), Leicester (2005), Montréal (2011, 2013) or Sydney. In New York, the study developed by the "New York Nightlife Association" (2004) showed that the economy of the night generated 9.7 billion dollars and employed 95,500 people.

In terms of governance, the Amsterdam's Night Mayor experience was repeated in Paris, Toulouse and Nantes. In Geneva, a large "Nightlife Council" was created as an independent group, composed of professionals, amateurs and specialists whose objective is to advocate for the establishment of favorable conditions for a "rich, varied and enlivened nightlife". In several cities such as Lille, Strasbourg or Grenoble, "Nightlife Statutes" were implemented among businesses, collectivities and users to try to regulate the conflicts between the city which sleeps and the one that works and has fun. For public tranquility, beyond Turckheim's (Alsace) folkloric "Night-watch", there is also the need for to consider the "Westminster City Guardians", Barcelona's "cochichadores" and Paris' "Nocturnal Pierrot". We can also mention the "participative night marches" of Canadian women, of successful endeavors that improved the illumination of public spaces or of neighborhoods in the peripheries. Instead of the sad and useless curfew imposed on teenagers of American cities, we can opt for nocturnal pleasures more adapted to their situation and services open until later (gyms, social centers...), such as it occurs in Asturias, Spain, where delinquency clearly diminished, just as it did in Rennes. We cannot forget the dimensions of suffering and isolation, more acute at night than during the day, intensifying social solidarity and receptivity, much in line with the exemplary work undertaken by Samu Social in Paris⁹. In terms of services, the 24h call center in Rome is another lead to be followed.

A CHALLENGE FOR THE CITY AND FOR SOCIETY

Through some of these leads, we can see that the night is a formidable reservoir of creativity for the day.

A political Question. As a caricature of the city, urban nightlife teaches us a lot about the day and about our possible futures. Is a 24h city desirable or detestable? It is up to us to decide. The night isn't a commodity, but, in face of the continuous time of the economy and the system, launching a widespread debate on the continuous city doesn't mean accepting tendencies. Much to the contrary. The night, last-standing frontier of the city, is a territory of collective invention for the diurnal city. We save, reinvent and re- enchant the night.

A collective Challenge. Ephemeral and cyclical space of life, last-standing frontier to be explored and original switch over to be preserved, the night still challenges us. It is a challenge for researchers who can dream making the city's day into its night. It is a challenge for collectivities who should redefine their management of space and time so as to avoid the development of conflicts, temporal segregation and the negative effects of a "pruned time". In face of fears and other security-related tensions, we need to occupy and populate the urban night and redefine the contours of a more accessible and hospitable city. A new urbanism, the pleasure of encountering the other, are, well, challenges for all us. Do we want a city in a 24h continuum? Do we desire the night to be invaded by the values and rules of the diurnal city?

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